United Nations

Report of the Committee on Information

General Assembly

Official Records • Forty-ninth Session
Supplement No.21 (A/49/21)

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NOTE

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CONTENTS

Chapter		Paragraphs	Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1 - 9	1
II.	ORGANIZATIONAL QUESTIONS	10 - 21	3
	A. Opening of the session	10	3
	B. Appointment of new members	11	3
	C. Election of officers	12 - 15	3
	D. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work	16 - 17	4
	E. Observers	18 - 19	5
	F. Other matters	20 - 21	5
III.	GENERAL DEBATE AND CONSIDERATION OF SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS	22 - 60	6
IV.	PREPARATION AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FORTY-NINTH SESSION	61 - 65	15

Annexes

I.	Statement by the Acting Chairman of the Committee on Information at the opening of the sixteenth session	21
II.	Statement by the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information at the opening of the sixteenth session	24

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its thirty-fourth session, the General Assembly decided to maintain the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, established under Assembly resolution 33/115 C of 18 December 1978, which would be known as the Committee on Information, and to increase its membership from 41 to 66. In its resolution 34/182 of 18 December 1979, the Assembly requested the Committee on Information:

> "(a) To continue to examine United Nations public information policies and activities, in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperatives of the establishment of the new international economic order and of a new world information and communication order;
>
> "(b) To evaluate and follow up the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications;
>
> "(c) To promote the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information and to make recommendations thereon to the General Assembly;"

and requested the Committee on Information and the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

2. At its thirty-fifth session, the General Assembly, in resolution 35/201 of 16 December 1980, expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the report of the Committee and the recommendations of its Ad Hoc Working Group, 1/ reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in Assembly resolution 34/182, and decided to increase the membership of the Committee from 66 to 67. The Committee on Information agreed, at its organizational session in 1980, that the principle of geographical rotation would be applied to all the officers of the Committee and that they should be elected for two-year terms of office.

3. At its thirty-sixth to forty-fifth sessions, the General Assembly again expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the reports of the Committee 2/ and its recommendations, and reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in resolution 34/182 (General Assembly resolutions 36/149 B, 37/94 B, 38/82 B, 39/98 A, 40/164 A, 41/68 A, 42/162, 43/60, 44/50 and 45/76. At its forty-sixth session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee 3/ and adopted its consensus recommendations as contained in General Assembly resolutions 46/73 A and B. The Assembly further requested the Committee to report to the Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

4. At its thirty-ninth session, the General Assembly appointed two new members of the Committee, namely China and Mexico; at its forty-first session the Assembly appointed Malta as a new member of the Committee; at its forty-third session, Hungary, Ireland and Zimbabwe were appointed; and at its forty-fourth session, the Assembly appointed Nepal as a new member.

5. At its forty-fifth session, the Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Committee on Information, to increase the membership of the Committee from 74 to 78 members, and appointed Czechoslovakia, the Islamic Republic of Iran,

Jamaica and Uruguay as members of the Committee. The General Assembly also decided on the appointment of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic as a member of the Committee on Information, with immediate effect, to fill the vacancy left by the German Democratic Republic.

6. At its forty-sixth session, the Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Committee, to increase the membership of the Committee from 78 to 79 members and appointed Burkina Faso as a member of the Committee.

7. At its forty-seventh session, the Assembly decided on the recommendation of the Committee, to increase the membership of the Committee from 79 to 81 and appointed the Republic of Korea and Senegal as members of the Committee.

8. At its forty-eighth session, the Assembly decided on the recommendation of the Committee, to increase the membership of the Committee from 81 to 83 and appointed Gabon and Israel as members of the Committee.

9. The Committee is composed of the following Member States:

Algeria
Argentina
Bangladesh
Belarus
Belgium
Benin
Brazil
Bulgaria
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Chile
China
Colombia
Congo
Costa Rica
Côte d'Ivoire
Cuba
Cyprus
Denmark
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Ethiopia
Finland
France
Gabon
Germany
Ghana
Greece
Guatemala
Guinea
Guyana
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kenya
Lebanon
Malta
Mexico
Mongolia
Morocco
Nepal
Netherlands
Niger
Nigeria
Pakistan
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Republic of Korea
Romania
Russian Federation
Senegal
Singapore
Slovakia
Somalia
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Syrian Arab Republic
Togo
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United Republic of Tanzania
United States of America
Uruguay
Venezuela
Viet Nam
Yemen
Yugoslavia
Zaire
Zimbabwe

II. ORGANIZATIONAL QUESTIONS

A. Opening of the session

10. The organizational meeting of the sixteenth session of the Committee was held at United Nations Headquarters on 9 May 1994. Prior to the official opening of the session, a solemn meeting to commemorate World Press Freedom Day (3 May) was convened. The speakers were a Vice-President of the General Assembly on behalf of the President of the General Assembly; the Assistant Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for Communications, Information and Informatics; the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information; and the Acting Chairman of the Committee on Information. Following the statements, the meeting adjourned to the Meditation Room of the Public Lobby for a wreath-laying ceremony dedicated to those media professionals who had lost their lives in the line of duty. The President of the United Nations Correspondents' Association spoke on that occasion. Subsequently, the Acting Chairman and the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information made introductory statements at the substantive part of the meeting (see annexes I and II).

B. Appointment of new members

11. The Committee welcomed the representatives of Gabon and Israel as new members.

C. Election of officers

12. The officers of the Committee on Information for the period 1993-1994 at the start of the session were as follows:

Chairman: Mr. Mansoor Suhail (Pakistan)

Vice-Chairmen: Mr. Alejandro H. Nieto (Argentina)
Mr. Philemon K. Chokwe (Kenya)
Mr. Stanislaw Konik (Poland)

Rapporteur: Dr. Niall Holohan (Ireland)

13. Upon the nomination of the representative of Congo, the Committee elected by acclamation, Mr. Mamadou Serme (Burkina Faso), to serve as Vice-Chairman to complete an unexpired term of office in the Bureau.

14. In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Konik presided over the session as Acting Chairman. At the final meeting of the session, notification of the resignation of the Chairman, Mr. Mansoor Suhail, following his reassignment and subsequent departure from Headquarters, was received. Accordingly, Mr. Salman Abbasy (Pakistan), upon the nomination of the representative of Nepal as Chairman of the Group of Asian States, was elected by acclamation to complete the unexpired term of office of Chairman. A new Chairman would be elected in May of 1995 at the seventeenth session of the Committee.

15. The officers of the Committee on Information for the period 1993-1994 are therefore as follows:

Chairman: Mr. Salman Abbasy (Pakistan)

Vice-Chairmen: Mr. Alejandro H. Nieto (Argentina)
Mr. Mamadou Serme (Burkina Faso)
Mr. Stanislaw Konik (Poland)

Rapporteur: Mr. Niall Holohan (Ireland)

D. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work

16. At its organizational meeting, the Committee adopted, without objection, the following agenda and programme of work: 4/

1. Opening of the session.

2. Appointment of new members.

3. Election of officers.

4. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.

5. General debate and consideration of substantive questions:

   (a) Promotion of the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information;

   (b) Continuation of the examination of United Nations public information policies and activities in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperatives of the establishment of the new international economic order and of a new world information and communication order;

   (c) Evaluation and follow-up of the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications.

6. Preparation and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session.

7. Other matters.

17. The sixteenth session of the Committee on Information, chaired by one of its Vice-Chairmen, Mr. Stanislaw Konik (Poland), continued with its substantive meetings at United Nations Headquarters from 9 to 24 May 1994. For consideration of item 5 of the agenda, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC), submitted pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 6 of its resolution 46/73 B; 5/

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the status of Development Forum, submitted pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 5 of its resolution 48/44 B; 6/

(c) Report of the Secretary-General on the review of publications by the Department of Public Information, submitted pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 6 of its resolution 48/44 B; 7/

(d) Report of the Secretary-General on the integration of United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), submitted pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 8 of resolution 48/44 B; 8/

(e) Report of the Secretary-General on United Nations information centres in 1993: allocation of resources from the regular budget of the United Nations, submitted pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 11 of its resolution 48/44 B; 9/

(f) Report of the Secretary-General on the enhancing, reactivation and establishment of United Nations information centres, submitted pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 13 of resolution 48/44 B; 10/

(g) Report of the Secretary-General on observations and suggestions by Member States on ways and means of furthering the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, submitted pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 20 of resolution 48/44 B. 11/

E. Observers

18. The following Member States took part in the session as observers: Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Belize, Cameroon, Croatia, Czech Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Kazakhstan, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Monaco, Namibia, Nicaragua and Sweden. The representatives of the Holy See and Switzerland also participated as observers.

19. Representatives of UNESCO and the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) also attended.

F. Other matters

20. The Committee on Information decided to conduct further informal consultations through the Bureau, the spokespersons of the regional groups, the Group of 77 and China.

21. The Chairman informed the Committee that Belize, Croatia, the Czech Republic and Kazakhstan had requested to become members of the Committee.

III. GENERAL DEBATE AND CONSIDERATION OF SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS

22. Statements during the general debate were made by the following States members of the Committee: Algeria (on behalf of the Group of 77 developing countries), Argentina, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland (on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States), Gabon, Greece (on behalf of the European Union), Guinea, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Japan, Jordan, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Ukraine, and Uruguay. Statements were also made by the observers of Croatia, Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic.

23. In addressing the substantive questions before the Committee, all speakers pointed to the increasing challenges facing the world community in the closing years of the twentieth century. These were global in nature and required multilateral solutions, and were, in turn, being reflected on the ever-lengthening agenda of the General Assembly. In the words of one delegation, speaking on behalf of a number of others, accurate and objective public information, addressing both the achievements of the United Nations and the problems it faced, were vital at a time when post-cold war euphoria was giving way to a measure of doubt in the Organization's abilities to fulfil many mandates. A number of speakers said that they regarded the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations as a milestone in its history and a tremendous opportunity for a concerted public information campaign.

24. Delegations expressed their satisfaction at the continuing consensus in the Committee. They hoped it would be maintained and strengthened. That was essential in order to help the United Nations, and the Department of Public Information, meet the challenges ahead. They also welcomed recent measures and initiatives taken by the Department, as well as the continued stability of its operations. Many delegations felt that the informal briefing sessions before and during the session, as well as the regular meetings of the extended Bureau provided a helpful and constructive tool to deal with the issues of mutual concern.

25. Almost all delegations emphasized the power of information and its pivotal role in the world today, both as an instrument of social, cultural, political and economic change and as an instrument of peace, democracy and development. Many delegations expressed their commitment to a more balanced world information order, which would aim to eliminate the existing disparities between the developed and developing world in terms of modern technology and human resources training, as well as to increase mutual understanding and promote peace and prosperity. They believed that access to the free flow of information was a legitimate quest for all peoples, as was the right to convey their news "first-hand", which would ensure a diversity of information sources. A number of the speakers were of the opinion that the peoples of the developing world were living in "media ghettos", locked out of participation in the modern communications revolution. The view was expressed by several delegations that the existing imbalances might become more acute unless the developing countries were assisted in overcoming the technical and financial difficulties which were a barrier to their development of communications infrastructures. Several speakers in that connection emphasized the importance of strengthening South-South cooperation.

26. All speakers agreed that the freedom of information which was, even now, being restricted in some countries, according to several delegations, was the touchstone of all the freedoms and was intrinsically linked to the freedom of the press. They supported the ideals of World Press Freedom Day, and praised and paid tribute to those brave journalists and media professionals who had died in the line of duty. One speaker especially noted the number of journalists killed in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. A delegation suggested that the United Nations should initiate the drafting of a legally binding instrument in order to protect journalists.

27. Many delegations expressed their support for continued United Nations cooperation with UNESCO and its International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC). They remarked on the positive achievements of the seminars organized jointly by UNESCO and the Department of Public Information in Windhoek and Almaty and, most recently, at Santiago, which were devoted to promoting an independent and pluralistic press in those regions. Several delegations said that they hoped that a similar seminar would be organized for the Arab region in 1995.

28. One delegation spoke out against what he regarded as the continuing violation of his country's sovereignty committed in the name of the free flow of information and alleged that the Charter of the United Nations and other international instruments were being violated by a number of radio stations and one television station broadcasting from another Member State. It was his belief that no single set of priorities should be imposed on a country from the outside, he stated.

29. In addressing the subject of the public information policies and activities of the United Nations, all speakers congratulated the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information on assuming his new functions as head of the Department of Public Information. They thanked him for his informative and thought-provoking introductory overview and expressed the confidence that his leadership would greatly benefit from his long years of experience. They all expressed their continued support for the work of the Department and their willingness to cooperate fully with him in the execution of his duties.

30. Speakers commented on the challenging and indispensable role of the Department as the focal point of the information activities of the Organization, which in turn necessitated the Department's coverage of the whole range of issues currently before the United Nations. They supported the focal-point approach, which they were convinced would sharpen the focus and polish the image of the Organization, while eliminating duplication of effort. In addition, many delegations expressed the need for the Department to have flexibility in utilizing its resources and the need for constant re-evaluation of priorities in order to reflect the changes taking place in the world. Several speakers pointed to the new realities in the Middle East and South Africa. In that connection, a number of speakers welcomed the recent election in South Africa and congratulated the Department on its role in helping to bring about the end of the apartheid system. Several speakers said that the Department had greatly contributed to the process of decolonization over the years and some said it should now reallocate its resources to help with other African problems. One speaker said she hoped that the Department's information activities on the peace process in the Middle East would contribute to an atmosphere of peace and reconciliation, and another delegation reaffirmed the importance of the Department's programmes and activities in promoting wider support and affecting public opinion in donor countries to further the cause of peace in the Middle East.

31. All speakers expressed their appreciation to the Department and its staff for all of the many information products it produced and activities it successfully engaged in despite a more restrictive budgetary environment. They asked that it continue to streamline its work to increase cost-effectiveness. Several delegations expressed the view that the Committee on Information must not over-burden the Department without giving thought to its resources. One delegation said that it was concerned about the budget cuts at a critical time in the life of the Organization and expressed its belief that the Department could not continue to bear the brunt of these cuts. One delegation, on behalf of a large group, said that the relationship of the Department and information components located elsewhere in the United Nations should be further clarified; perhaps what was needed was the consolidation within the Department of the funds allocated for information activities outside the Department in order to maximize effectiveness and eliminate duplication.

32. Several delegations commented on the ongoing restructuring of the Department, which they believed was being carried out in order to maximize effectiveness. Another delegation set out what were in his opinion the three major categories that the Department's activities should fall into, namely "preventive, promotive and commemcrative". In regard to the latter category, he expressed the hope that it would result in the younger generation's becoming more appreciative of the work of the Organization.

33. With regard to the subject of coverage of General Assembly-mandated activities, one speaker, on behalf of a number of others, remarked on the Department's increased coverage and promotion of United Nations activities of particular interest to developing countries. However, several others expressed the belief that sometimes those who most needed the United Nations were the least familiar with its work. At a time when the Secretary-General was preparing his "Agenda for Development", many speakers reiterated the need for an intensified Department coverage of development and poverty issues. A number of speakers believed that excessive emphasis was being placed on peace-keeping work. There was a need to balance the work on the maintenance of international peace and security with that on development and other socio-economic issues.

34. However, all delegations agreed that the Department's range of information work on United Nations peace-keeping operations represented a monumental effort and was vital to the success of the many varied missions. Those activities were of the greatest significance for forming a positive world opinion, especially in the troop-contributing countries, and for informing the local public in the regions where the operations were being undertaken. Many delegations reiterated their belief that an information component should be built into any peace-keeping operation beginning at the planning stage. One speaker said that coordination between the Department of Public Information and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations was necessary in ensuring that information was individually tailored to each operation. One speaker said that he felt that the information delivered was better in some instances than in others, and used the example of the information disseminated on the operations of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia as having a positive effect. On the other hand, another delegation said a more effective United Nations information effort might for example, have helped to prevent some of the misunderstandings that arose as a result of particular incidents in Somalia. All agreed that it was vital to impart to the international community a deep understanding of the exact mandate in each and every case, including an explanation of the United Nations limitations in order to prevent misconceptions and unwarranted criticism. One delegation said that the possession by the United Nations Protection Force of a suitable radio transmitter would be of considerable assistance in the improved

dissemination of information on the situation in the former Yugoslavia. One speaker regretted that there seemed to be relative silence in the South African media about the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa, the largest electoral observer mission ever deployed by the United Nations, and thought there might perhaps be lessons to be learned from that.

35. All speakers expressed their support and appreciation for the Department's promotional work on the important upcoming conferences on development and social issues, including, among others, the International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in Cairo from 5 to 13 September 1994; the World Summit for Social Development, to be held at Copenhagen from 6 to 12 March 1995; and the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995. One speaker referred to the upcoming World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in Yokohama, Japan, and said that an effective public information campaign had been a priority and would greatly contribute to its success. A number of delegations specifically commented on the usefulness of the Department's new Development Update, which contained important information on these conferences and the linkages among them. One country, on behalf of a number of others, congratulated the Department's work on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and viewed it as a good example of what could be done. Another speaker said that his country believed it imperative for the Department to disseminate information on the HIV/AIDS epidemic. One delegation stressed that in a world witnessing a multitude of terrible human tragedies, such as in Rwanda, it was perhaps the appropriate time for the Department to appoint a humanitarian focal point. Another delegation underscored the value of the journalists' encounters organized by the Department in areas where human rights were being violated. They represented a means by which journalists could view the situations first-hand and report the truth to the world. It was important to publicize the upcoming tenth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster and the environmental and ecological catastrophe resulting from it, according to another delegation.

36. In commenting on the report before the Committee on the Department's publications, all speakers expressed support and appreciation for the many publications, as well as their firm belief in the importance of that type of output. A number of delegations noted that 21 publications had been devoted to peace-keeping operations and other political missions. One delegation was grateful for the issuance of An Agenda for Peace in the Nepali language. One speaker, on behalf of a large group, said that in publications, as in all other output, development issues should be covered and more publications should be issued on economic and social matters before the Organization. Many regretted the demise of Development Forum and hoped an alternative would be found by JUNIC. Several speakers expressed their appreciation for Africa Recovery and said they would like to see more information on the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. One speaker regretted that only one publication had been published in the Russian language, while another wanted to see more publications in Croatian. Another requested more information on the overall publications policy of the Department of Public Information. Several speakers remarked that it was important in producing publications, as in all information products, not to compromise flexibility by devoting too much attention to static output, as well as to consider the logic of demand, not just supply. Another said that in his opinion there could be money saved by cutting some superfluous salutations and closing paragraphs in a number of documents.

37. The Department's effective use of modern technology in the dissemination of its products was generally applauded by most speakers. One, however, said that, while he was appreciative of on-line services provided to Permanent Missions, he

believed that information could be made more "user-friendly" and be furnished faster. Another asked that more training be provided in the use of those services.

38. On the subject of the Department's audiovisual coverage of the activities of the United Nations, many delegations expressed their appreciation at the establishment of the United Nations Radio Bulletin Board, which they found very useful, and they supported its upgrading and expansion. One delegation was of the opinion that the Department's radio studios should have better quality transmission equipment. With regard to the television output of the Department, one delegation suggested that a monthly magazine for use by African television stations be considered. Another put forward the idea of co-productions of documentaries with outside sources.

39. A number of delegations addressed the importance of enhanced media relations. One delegation, on behalf of others, supported the recent efforts of the Department in shaping its partnership with media in member States, stressing the value of maintaining cooperative relations with the media at Headquarters. One speaker said that some press releases did not adequately reflect the speakers' words because of poor translations. Several stated that press releases must be issued on time in order to be useful. It was the job of the Department, in the words of one delegation, to provide balanced, accurate and timely information to "feed" the media and offer them guidance. Several speakers expressed the belief that the press briefings were indispensable to delegations and the world press.

40. All delegations stressed that the work of the United Nations information centres were of vital importance to the objectives and achievements of the Organization and to efforts of the Department at the grass-roots level and therefore deserved increased support. Some expressed the view that the operational capacities of these centres needed strengthening. The integration exercise was characterized by one speaker as perhaps the most important issue before the Committee, and it was the subject of lengthy debate. Many delegations commented positively on the "integration experience" in 16 centres, as mandated by the Secretary-General, and supported his intention to continue with it. They believed that the stated objectives of presenting a unified image in the field, enhancing information activities and achieving economies were being met, and that the concept was a sound one. On the other hand, a number of delegations thought that, although the exercise was instituted for good reasons, any future steps should only be taken very cautiously. Many supported a case-by-case approach in agreement and consultation with the host Governments, believing that integration might be beneficial in some countries, but not in others. Many also expressed support for close cooperation with UNDP, which could result in improved information on development.

41. The appropriate allocation of resources among the Centres continued to be a very important element in their effective functioning, according to some delegations. Several noted that the economies achieved in the London Information Centre were a positive step and looked forward to continuing such an approach in field operations. Many delegations appealed to host countries to make premises available free of charge and stressed the important role of the financial support of these countries. New centres, said one speaker, should be considered in the light of offers of that type of assistance.

42. Many delegations welcomed the actions taken by the Department to strengthen the system of information centres and resolve outstanding issues which involved enhancing, reactivating, or establishing centres at Sana'a, Tehran, Bujumbura,

Dar es Salaam and Dhaka. One speaker asked that the information centre at Dhaka be given a full complement of staff. As for the information centre at Tehran, another speaker said that through no fault of the host Government or the Department, the end result was that the changes had not been fully implemented. One delegation deplored personnel cuts in information centres and, regarding the staffing of the Bujumbura centre, said his Government was awaiting a Director. One representative said that his country had made a building available for the centre, but needed a full-time Director in his capital of Brazzaville. In addition, he believed that, although integration showed numerous positive aspects, it should not apply to the centre located in his country. Two delegations welcomed the Assistant Secretary-General's efforts concerning the centre at Ouagadougou. Another representative said information centres were a primary research and information source and requested a centre at Libreville, the capital of his country. One speaker said the Lagos Information Centre should be upgraded, as it was an important regional and subregional centre. Another speaker reiterated his Government's request for a centre at his capital, Conakry. One delegation said the post of Director at New Delhi, his country's capital, was vacant and hoped it would soon be filled.

43. Another speaker questioned why the University for Peace in Costa Rica was not being accepted as a United Nations information centre, since it was performing the task of focal point for disseminating information and promoting the activities of the United Nations. One delegation expressed its appreciation for the United Nations office at Kiev and its activities. Another said that the centre in his capital, Prague, was one of the oldest and his Government was providing financial support and would be reporting on the details shortly.

44. One delegation said it supported the eventual establishment of a United Nations information centre in Israel, when budgetary and logistical considerations made this practicable and appropriate. One speaker said that now that there was a normalization of the situation in Lebanon, it was time to reappoint a Director for the centre in his country's capital, Beirut. Another asked that the Department continue its efforts to upgrade local assistants to the level of national information officers, and upgrade existing equipment as well.

45. On the subject of another important DPI network of the Department, one delegation underscored the potential of the over 330 United Nations depository libraries located around the world and expressed his belief that they should be strengthened, as should the system for evaluating how the collections were being handled. He observed that there was significant room for improvement, and expressed his delegation's willingness to assist the Department in that endeavour.

46. One delegation noted that non-governmental organizations were another effective channel for disseminating United Nations information at the grass-roots level. He thanked the Department for its work in this regard and expressed gratitude for its cooperation on the conference of non-governmental organizations of the Commonwealth of Independent States, to be held later in 1994. Another commented on the importance of United Nations guided tours as a means of reaching out to the public, and expressed regret at the curtailment of the tour route, which prevented people from viewing the exhibit on the horrors of atomic warfare.

47. At the close of the general debate, the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information expressed his appreciation for the kind words addressed to him and to the Department. He said that, since he assumed his functions, he had

been encouraged by the new spirit of cooperation between the Committee and the Department. He stressed his intention to maintain a working dialogue beyond the current session and to contact each delegation participating in the debate to discuss points of individual concern. The Assistant Secretary-General took note of the favourable comments of delegations on the actions taken since his appointment to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources for operational activities among the information centres. He added that efforts would be made to ensure the optimum use of the Department's scarce resources among the whole range of its activities.

48. In responding to a number of delegations who commended the Department's contribution to the eradication of apartheid, he took note of their reference to the resources available within the Department at the close of the campaign and said they needed to be reviewed. While he awaited the guidance of the General Assembly on the matter, there appeared to be a potential need for an information component in the new South Africa.

49. The Department was fully aware of the need to highlight economic and social development issues, which contributed to the conditions fundamental to peace and reinforced the link between peace-keeping and the developmental aspects of post-conflict peace-building. In that regard, the Department would mobilize its efforts to publicize the issues contained in the forthcoming Secretary-General's Agenda for Development. The Department, in its new Development Update bulletins, was stressing the interrelationship of the issues under discussion in the 1994 and 1995 United Nations conferences on population and development, social development, women, natural disaster reduction and the development of small island countries. The Department was developing a major public information strategy for each conference, carefully planned to ensure that the mobilization of resources was timed for maximum impact. Those efforts would contribute to the overall information support for the United Nations Agenda for Development.

50. In publicizing these conferences and other United Nations issues, the Department considered the media as its partner. The Department was exploring ways of working more closely with the television media, and was helping to strengthen their United Nations-related programmes for mutual benefit by providing access to United Nations experts and appropriate materials and making arrangements for co-productions or redissemination of the United Nations own products. Through the efforts of certain information centres, regularly scheduled television programmes on the work of the United Nations had been established in a number of countries.

51. He welcomed the support of delegations for the Department's potential role in information activities on peace-keeping and reiterated his view that all peace-keeping information components should form an integral part of a well-defined United Nations information strategy. On the subject of humanitarian assistance issues, which were of concern to many delegations, he said that the Department maintained close liaison with the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, with a view to making the public better aware of the complementarity between the political, peace-keeping and humanitarian roles of the United Nations. He agreed that the suggestion for a focal point on humanitarian affairs was a good one, which would serve to strengthen the work of the section within the Department dealing with humanitarian activities.

52. On the subject of electronic communications, raised by a number of delegations, the Department had accelerated the introduction of the United Nations database with fast-processing capabilities and user-friendly interface

for use by delegations, the media and the public, to be completed by the end of the summer. The Department's databases were currently updated several times a day, contained in-depth information such as press releases, reports of the Secretary-General and Security Council resolutions, and were accessed by approximately 4,000 users daily. With regard to specific comments concerning the user-friendliness of the United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBIS), the Assistant Secretary-General agreed that UNBIS was a rather old system, and in fact, was one of the first large-scale database applications of the New York Computer Service mainframe computer. He noted that the Dag Hammarskjöld Library had plans to improve access to its files in two ways, through the issuance of UNBIS Plus on CD-ROM in the summer, and through acquiring modern, integrated library management hardware and software, based on the latest technology.

53. He noted with appreciation the positive observations on the Department's radio service, especially the United Nations Radio Bulletin Board and said the system continued to function, at no cost to the Department, because it used the existing in-house voice mail and regular telephone system. He hoped that the Committee could provide the Department with the legislative flexibility to make possible the upgrading and expansion of that system. Responding to the importance that delegations placed on radio programming, the Assistant Secretary-General said that he hoped that the Committee would encourage Member States to provide additional facilities for airing a regular and timely schedule of United Nations radio programming.

54. In response to the debate on the subject of integration of United Nations information centres with UNDP field offices, he assured the Committee that the Department would move prudently on a case-by-case basis, while keeping the Committee fully informed. The Department would also ensure that integrated centres continued to fulfil their information mandates and that the process would proceed, where appropriate, in close consultation with Governments concerned. Responding to the requests of a number of delegations that had declared their interest in the establishment of a new United Nations information centre or information component, he pointed out that the role of the Committee as a whole was of crucial relevance, in that the Committee normally recommended General Assembly approval. However, he hoped that the Committee would agree with him that the Department was not in a position to comply with every request for new centres or components unless the General Assembly authorized the additional necessary resources. If new decisions were taken in that respect, the Department would, of course, make the financial implications known to the Committee.

55. He confirmed his opening statement that the Department had initiated action to appoint directors in specific centres, yet he pointed out in response to questions concerning the posts of director at certain others, that, owing to the retrenchment exercise of 1989 and subsequent further cuts for United Nations information centre posts at the Professional level, there were no available posts to enable the Department to appoint full-time directors to those centres. However, the Department had provided staffing, equipment and training as necessary and the respective UNDP resident representatives, who served as acting directors of the centres, were providing full-time professional supervision and were directly responsible to the Department. The Assistant Secretary-General supported the suggestion of one delegation to produce materials at the information centres as a way of saving on the costs of the materials and their distribution and believed it could apply to the production and wider dissemination of materials in both official and non-official languages.

56. With regard to a question on the University of Peace in Costa Rica, he said that it could not be designated as a United Nations information centre, because the staff involved were not United Nations staff. However, the Department greatly appreciated the efforts of the personnel concerned.

57. He reminded delegations that the Publications Board had been recently revived, and in this connection, the Department would make every effort to ensure that publications were interesting and topical, that they reached a wide public and that they did not duplicate other materials available within the United Nations system. In response to a number of delegations that made reference to Development Forum, he said the Department would take the initiative to see that matter would be given priority attention at the upcoming meeting of JUNIC in July.

58. In view of delegations' interest, he reiterated that Africa's economic recovery and development was a priority for the Department, especially in terms of its role in helping to achieve the continent's goals contained in the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. African development concerns featured heavily in all the Department's print and audio-visual outputs and considerable success had been realized in having the international and African media reproduce its materials. Further, the most concrete expression of the Department's concern in that regard was the recent elevation of the Africa Recovery Unit to a Section, with the addition of a Professional post.

59. Regarding the concern of delegations on the recent restrictions placed on the guided tours at Headquarters, he said that, with the support of the Committee on Information, the Department would continue to seek the cooperation of all appropriate departments in making the guided tours a meaningful experience once again for all visitors.

60. He assured delegations that the Department would try to evaluate its mandates in an effort to avoid spreading its efforts too sparsely. The Department believed it might now be time for the international community to review the calendar of special observances, bearing in mind that increasing numbers could result in less impact for individual special events. He expressed the belief that the Department could operate more effectively with increased operational expenses, more flexibility in their application and greater human resources mobility. He viewed the present as an opportune time for the Department to demonstrate the genuine professionalism that existed within its ranks.

IV. PREPARATION AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FORTY-NINTH SESSION

61. At its 8th meeting, on 24 May 1994, the Committee decided by consensus to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

Draft resolution A

Information in service of humanity

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information,

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information,

Urges all countries, organizations of the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethical values through endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources and their free access to information and recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process":

(a) To cooperate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

(b) To ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

(c) To provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

(d) To enhance regional efforts and cooperation among developing countries, as well as cooperation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communication capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and

communication technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

(e) To aim, in addition to bilateral cooperation, at providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and their media, public, private or other, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(i) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(ii) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and their media, public, private or other, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(iii) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(iv) The facilitation, as appropriate, of access by the developing countries to advanced communication technology available on the open market;

(f) To provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media.

Draft resolution B

United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming its primary role in elaborating, coordinating and harmonizing United Nations policies and activities in the field of information,

Also reaffirming that the Secretary-General should ensure that the activities of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, as the focal point of the public information tasks of the United Nations, are strengthened and improved, keeping in view the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the priority areas defined by the General Assembly on the recommendations of the Committee on Information,

Taking note of all reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the Committee on Information,

1. Decides to consolidate the role of the Committee on Information as its main body mandated to make recommendations relating to the work of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat;

2. Calls upon the Secretary-General, in respect of United Nations public information policies and activities, to implement fully the recommendations contained in paragraph 2 of resolution 48/44 B of 10 December 1993;

3. Decides, however, following the establishment of a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa, to discontinue United Nations information efforts in support of the eradication of apartheid;

4. Notes with appreciation the valuable contribution of the Department of Public Information in support of the eradication of apartheid;

5. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General regarding the continuous and major publications of the Department of Public Information 12/ and urges all efforts to ensure timely production and dissemination of its major publications, in particular the UN Chronicle, the Yearbook of the United Nations and Africa Recovery, maintaining consistent editorial independence and accuracy, taking the necessary measures to ensure that its output contains adequate, objective and equitable information about issues before the Organization, reflecting divergent opinions wherever they occur;

6. Also takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the status of Development Forum 6/ and encourages the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) to continue its consideration of the matter;

7. Requests the management of the Department of Public Information to review the Department's publications and proposals for publications to ensure that all publications fulfil an identifiable need, that they do not duplicate other publications inside or outside the United Nations system, and that they are produced in a cost-effective manner, and to report to the Committee on Information at its seventeenth session;

8. Reaffirms the importance attached by Member States to the role of United Nations information centres in effectively and comprehensively disseminating information, particularly in developing countries and countries in transition, about United Nations activities;

9. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the results of the trial of integrating United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme, 8/ and invites the Secretary-General to continue the integration exercise whenever feasible, on a case-by-case basis, and taking into account the views of the host country, while ensuring that the information functions of the United Nations information centres are not adversely affected, and to report to the Committee on Information;

10. Reaffirms the role of the General Assembly in relation to the opening of new United Nations information centres and invites the Secretary-General, as well, to make such recommendations as he may judge necessary regarding the establishment and location of these centres;

11. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General regarding the allocation of resources to United Nations information centres in 1993 9/ and calls upon him to continue to study ways and means to rationalize and effect equitable disbursement of available resources to all United Nations information centres and to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its seventeenth session;

12. Welcomes the action by some Member States with regard to financial and material support to United Nations information centres in their respective capitals;

13. Notes the progress made towards finalizing arrangements for a United Nations information component in Warsaw, and requests the Secretary-General to continue, within existing resources of the Department of Public Information, preparations with the Government of Poland to this end;

14. Also takes note of the progress made by the Secretary-General and the German authorities towards establishing, within existing resources of the Department of Public Information, a United Nations information centre in Bonn;

15. Notes with appreciation the action taken, or being taken, by the Secretary-General regarding the establishment, reactivation and enhancement of the United Nations information centres in Sana'a, Bujumbura, Dar es Salaam and Dhaka;

16. Takes note of the action being taken by the Secretary-General regarding the reactivation of the United Nations information centre in Tehran and calls upon the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its seventeenth substantive session on the full reactivation of that information centre;

17. Welcomes the continued enhanced cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the University for Peace in Costa Rica as a focal point for promoting United Nations activities and disseminating United Nations information materials;

18. Takes note of the requests of Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Gabon, Guinea, Haiti and Slovakia for information centres or information components;

19. Expresses its full support to the wide and prompt coverage of United Nations activities through a continuation of United Nations press releases in both working languages of the Secretariat;

20. Encourages the Secretary-General to explore ways and means to improve the access of United Nations Radio to airwaves worldwide, bearing in mind that radio is one of the most cost-effective and far-reaching media available to the Department of Public Information;

21. Takes note of the recommendations and observations by Member States contained in the report of the Secretary-General 11/ and invites Member States that wish to do so to submit their observations and suggestions to the Secretary-General by 1 February 1995, on ways and means of furthering the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with a view to consolidating recent experience in the field of international cooperation aimed at enabling them to develop their own information and communication capacities freely and independently, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its seventeenth session;

22. Recommends, in order to facilitate continued contact between the Department of Public Information and the Committee on Information between sessions, that the Bureau of the Committee on Information, together with representatives of each regional group, the Group of 77 and China, in close

contact with members of the Committee, should meet, as required, and consult at periodic intervals with representatives of the Department;

23. Takes note of the request by Belarus and Ukraine to consider the development and implementation of a system-wide programme for the tenth anniversary in 1996 of the Chernobyl disaster;

24. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its seventeenth session in 1995 and to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session in 1995, on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution;

25. Decides that the next session of the Committee on Information should last ten working days and invites the Bureau of the Committee to explore ways and means of making optimum use of the Committee's time;

26. Requests the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session;

27. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fiftieth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

62. Also at its 8th meeting, the Committee decided, by consensus, to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decision:

Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information

Draft decision

The General Assembly decides to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 83 to 87 members and decides to appoint Belize, Croatia, the Czech Republic and Kazakhstan as members of the Committee on Information.

63. After the adoption without a vote of the draft report, as orally revised, two delegations expressed reservations on certain elements of paragraph 9 in draft resolution B. Another delegation made reference to the issuance of the Spanish and Arabic press releases containing all of the resolutions of the General Assembly and requested that a reference to these language versions be included in draft resolution B. One delegation, for the record, said that its acceptance of the resolutions did not indicate its recognition of a particular Member State.

64. Closing statements were made both by the Acting Chairman and by the newly elected Chairman of the Committee, as well as by the representatives of Bulgaria (on behalf of the group of Eastern European States), Congo (on behalf of the group of African States), Costa Rica (on behalf of the group of Latin American and Caribbean States), Nepal (on behalf of the group of Asian States) and the United Kingdom (on behalf of the group of Western European and other States).

65. The Chairman announced that the next session of the Committee was scheduled for 1 to 12 May 1995.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/35/21), annex, sect. V.

2/ Ibid., Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/36/21); ibid., Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/37/21 and Corr.1); ibid., Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/38/21 and Corr.1 and 2); ibid., Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/39/21); ibid., Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/40/21); ibid., Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/41/21); ibid., Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/42/21); ibid., Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/43/21); ibid., Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/44/21); ibid., Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/45/21).

3/ Ibid., Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/46/21).

4/ A/AC.198/1994/1.

5/ A/AC.198/1994/2.

6/ A/AC.198/1994/3.

7/ A/AC.198/1994/4.

8/ A/AC/198/1994/5.

9/ A/AC.198/1994/6.

10/ A/AC.198/1994/7.

11/ A/AC.198/1994/8.

12/ A/AC.198/1993/5.

ANNEX I

Statement by the Acting Chairman of the Committee on Information at the opening of the sixteenth session

Over the past several years, this Committee - indeed the entire world - has witnessed the dynamic evolution of the role of the United Nations. With the Organization thrust into the sometimes harsh spotlight of media attention, the role of the Department of Public Information, not surprisingly, has been a critical issue on the agenda of this Committee and, indeed, the General Assembly. The Committee's general debates and consideration of substantive reports prepared by the Secretariat have revealed the need - and strong desire - to strengthen United Nations information systems and programmes to give policy makers, governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as the media and, through the media, the public at large as much information as possible - and therefore understanding - of the Organization and its work. There can be no question about it. The information activities of the United Nations, like the Organization itself, are in a period of transition, and, I believe, the diligent work of this Committee over recent years has provided direction and support to the communications arm of the Secretariat.

Significantly, in dealing with a number of complex issues, it has been possible to maintain the consensus in this Committee. I am certain that I speak for all delegations when I reiterate our intention to preserve the consensus this year. In doing so, we shall need to take into account the changes which have occurred over the past year and to reaffirm our agreement on certain basic principles in the mandate given to the Department of Public Information by the General Assembly, on the recommendation of this Committee.

At the same time, I should also like to propose that, instead of adding new elements to its recommendations year in and year out, the Committee might approach the preparation of its recommendations by producing a short list of proposals concentrating on a limited number of clusters that would address most of the Committee's pressing concerns. Those elements would highlight the areas to which the General Assembly would request the Department of Public Information to attach priority, while continuing to carry out its traditional mandate. Thus, instead of reviewing last year's set of recommendations paragraph by paragraph, may I suggest that the initial paragraph of our recommendations this year recall General Assembly resolution 48/44 B and proceed with the elaboration of a limited number of priority concerns which we can expect to crystallize in the course of both the general debate and the information briefings on the work of the different areas of the Department of Public Information that the Department has kindly arranged.

Over recent years, the Committee has identified certain areas of priority, which will again be considered during this current session. One of the main clusters of interest has always been the system of United Nations information centres. I should pause at this stage to reiterate the conviction of this Committee that there is a continued need for United Nations information centres to fulfil their mandate and, for those centres which have been integrated with UNDP field offices, to exercise full autonomy in the performance of their public information functions.

This session, almost half of the documents before this Committee focus on issues related to United Nations information centres. Document A/AC.198/1994/5 contains the report of the Secretary-General on the results of the current trial

of integrating 18 information centres with UNDP field offices, reflecting as well the views of host countries. As you will recall, this document was prepared in response to the request contained in paragraph 8 of resolution 48/44 B to assist the Committee in its work on this important matter. Further to assist the Committee and in response to the request of the Extended Bureau, the Department and UNDP have arranged to have present at the informal briefing sessions a director of an integrated information centre. Delegations will therefore have the opportunity to learn first hand of the experiences gained through the integration exercise.

In response to a separate request, in paragraph 11 of resolution 48/44 B, document A/AC.198/1994/6 reports on the allocation of regular budget resources among United Nations information centres in 1993. In addition to the data provided in the annex to the report, the report offers observations on how the operational funding is spent and invites the attention of the Committee to cases where there is no host government support or where extrabudgetary commitments are not being met, in an effort to shed light on the negative and sometimes crippling effect of the need to redirect resources to remedy the financial circumstances of some centres on the operations of others.

Document A/AC.198/1994/7 presents the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 48/44 B, 47/73 B and 46/73 B on the enhancing, reactivation and establishment of United Nations information centres. This report provides the Committee with the most recent information on the status of implementation of relevant resolutions and offers important information on a subject of deep interest to this Committee over the last few years.

Another cluster which has been given priority by the Committee is the subject of publications issued by the Department of Public Information. Document A/AC.198/1994/4 presents the Secretary-General's report on the review of the Department's non-recurrent publications, which supplements the report on the Department's publications reviewed by the Committee at its last session. We also have before us at the present session document A/AC.198/1994/3 on the status of Development Forum. Distinguished delegates will recall that the publishing programme and processes, and their related costs, have consistently been a subject of interest to the Committee, and, I believe, we can look forward to identifying means of enhancing this important aspect of public information activities.

The two other reports before this Committee in documents A/AC.198/1994/2 and A/AC.198/1994/8 concern, respectively, the activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee over the past year and the status of observations and suggestions by Member States on ways and means of furthering the development of communications infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries. The full report on the latter subject will, as decided earlier this morning, be taken up at the Committee's seventeenth substantive session.

These areas of particular interest, along with reports we shall receive from the Assistant Secretary-General and his colleagues during both our formal meetings and informal briefing sessions on public information programmes will, I believe, assist us greatly in formulating our recommendations to the General Assembly.

With regard to the practical question of preparing our recommendations, may I suggest that this year we again work at the level of the Extended Bureau, containing the spokespersons for the regional groups, the Group of 77 and China,

and convene a working group, if necessary. Speaking of the Extended Bureau, I should like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues for their diligent efforts in maintaining continuity in the work of the Extended Bureau and its consultations with the Department of Public Information throughout the year, as mandated by the General Assembly.

ANNEX II

Statement by the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information at the opening of the sixteenth session

I

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I am very happy to welcome you to the sixteenth session of the Committee on Information. Having worked with this Committee in various capacities in the past, I look forward to continuing - indeed increasing - cooperation between the Department of Public Information and this expert body; not only during the Committee's formal sessions, but by meeting during the year with the extended bureau, individual groups and delegations. Through such a close relationship, the Department of Public Information can be fully aware of the perceptions you have of the Department and its work, while the Department can keep you fully informed. I am confident, Mr. Chairman, that under your able and experienced leadership and with the support of the members of the Committee and the Extended Bureau, we can all look forward to regular, open communication, and, I hope, a constructive relationship.

As the Secretary-General has stated on several occasions, the world has entered a new stage in its history. The passage from one phase of history to another is never easy and the present moment is increasingly demanding. More and more problems are global in nature and require multilateral solutions. The United Nations has become the global forum for dealing with those problems. Now, the Organization needs more support than ever before in its history. And in that context, we - all of us together - are the United Nations. We have a mutual commitment and a joint responsibility. And, if I may refer in particular to the Committee on Information and the Department of Public Information, we certainly have a common objective. This, I am confident, will be demonstrated in practical terms during the deliberations of our current session.

As we celebrate tomorrow a new South Africa, I should like to pay special tribute to the South African people, who voted freely in an historic change to dismantle the apartheid system. Members of the Committee will recall the Department's efforts within the international campaign against apartheid, through press, radio, television, seminars and NGO activities, and that the resources mobilized in that struggle are now vindicated.

From the day I took over as head of the Department, a top priority has been to sharpen the focus on special current requirements, to perceive the changes around us, to listen to the expectations offered to us by delegations, and to consolidate a revitalized Department of Public Information which can respond more effectively to the challenges before it.

Having just returned from Zagreb, the headquarters of the United Nations Protection Force, I should like to stress the important role of public information in peace-keeping operations. The Department of Public Information would earnestly like to participate actively in that area of growing United Nations interest and increasing public concern. In that regard, I should like to emphasize that all peace-keeping information components should form an integral part of a well-defined United Nations information strategy, which should take into account countries hosting peace-keeping operations and those contributing troops in the field. Indeed, it is essential that the Department joins in at the earliest stages of a mission, that a representative of the

Department is always included in the survey team dispatched at the conceptual stages, and that an information strategy is viewed as a critical element to ensuring an active operation.

As the communications arm of the United Nations, the Department of Public Information is expected to spearhead the move to mobilize international opinion and support for the Organization's new tasks. At the same time, in addition to meeting pressing demands, and covering regular activities, the Department is expected to extend support to the many, many mandates of the Organization, including those on the international agenda for decades and those not necessarily in the spotlight. Overall, the Department is expected to promote 12 major United Nations conferences, 13 international decades, 5 international years and at least 21 annual international days and weeks. While making every effort to do so, we must find ways to utilize best our resources by concentrating on certain specific priorities and deliver the best possible result. We must pool our resources and streamline our structure so as operationally to gain as much as possible.

Despite limited resources and other constraints, the United Nations can no longer afford to stand idle in the face of the expanding growth in global telecommunications technology. With the Organization now more than ever at centre stage of the world's attention, we must enhance this position and use it to convey a strong and clearly channelled message. We must open a true dialogue - a two-way information highway, if you will; for that is the essence of communication. We must stay aware of how our message is being received, the perceptions it is forming, and we must take corrective action - when needed and however difficult - to clear up misunderstandings or misconceptions.

We all know that it is not always easy to achieve the desired results. In many respects, the work of public information is qualitative, not quantitative. We can take an easy way out by simply saying that there are so many General Assembly agenda items, so many peace-keeping operations and so many observances. However, it is our duty to explore the most effective ways to communicate what they are about, and what the United Nations is doing in various fields of special concern.

We must sharpen the focus, set priorities, produce high quality products, and strategically select the media and audiences. We must channel and direct our activities through effective and targeted dissemination means - be they print publications, television video materials, or even T-shirts and bumper stickers. And, last but not least, we observe and think - we gauge the impact and reinvest the feedback into future projects.

I would suggest that, in the rapid-paced world of late twentieth-century communications, United Nations information must fix its focus more sharply on the priority issues set by the membership and directed by the Secretary-General. The Department of Public Information must be the partner of every Secretariat office and organization in the United Nations system, working side-by-side, first to conceptualize an understanding of the information priorities and then to project a unified, strong image and clear message. In this regard, inter-agency cooperation and the work of the Joint United Nations Information Committee have gained a pivotal new dimension.

First and foremost, the message. We must speak with one voice and deliver clear, concise concepts to varied, and in many cases saturated, audiences. I am aware of the statements made by many delegations last fall on this score. The General Assembly has noted, as has my Department, the fragmentation of

information components and resources outside the Department. When left uncoordinated, these public information activities lose direction and impact.

The Department of Public Information, as the potential focal point for all information activities of the Organization can and must ensure a coordinated, overall approach to the multitude of issues before us. The Department can find linkages between events and trends, build success stories, forge a solid and coherent identity for the United Nations in all dimensions of its work. Not only peace-keeping; not only the dramatic moments of conflict resolution; but also basic actions like inoculating children, preserving human rights, assisting in building national and international infrastructures - the vast array of social and economic activities confronting our world, and thus, facing this Organization.

Incidentally, when we think of peace-keeping, most of us can bring to mind United Nations convoys and blue helmets on their way to war-torn areas. But, the message of peace-keeping is more than images of blue helmets or helicopters. The humanitarian role, the civilian dimension will have to be highlighted. Not only helmets and soldiers, but paramedics and teachers. We have to develop communications strategies that open a dialogue on a wide concept of peace with the whole spectrum of audiences, including host and troop-contributing countries. Educational information, incidentally, is a special area to develop. Working with educational institutions in Member States, we actually become partners with the academic community in promoting a sense of internationalism in every segment of society, from the earliest, and most impressionable, stages to academia and prestigious "think tanks".

Information strategies must forge and highlight the link among the diversity of United Nations activities. With this in mind, the Department of Public Information has developed a bi-monthly bulletin called Development Update to underscore the interrelationship between issues of relevance to the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women. The Department has also formed a network of focal points in all substantive departments to help in publicizing their varied yet interrelated activities. Although they may not be headline-grabbing news, they, too, certainly deserve to be noted and could gradually contribute to building a positive unified image.

But, as you will agree, the value of information is no longer only in what is said and announced, but the means by which - and quickly - we get the information to our audiences. Information not well-disseminated or disseminated late, becomes useless information. This has been a chronic difficulty for the United Nations as a whole, not only for the Department. Bottlenecks in the distribution process have crippled many a worthwhile initiative.

Increasingly, journalists, researchers and the general public seek information in an electronic format. Archival materials are now readily accessed through computer databases. Libraries, including the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in the Department of Public Information, have more and more taken on the role of "electronic information brokers". Press releases and documents of particular interest to the media are now transmitted world-wide almost immediately through electronic links with United Nations information centres, United Nations system offices, as well as Reuters, the Federal News Service, Agora and Global Education Motivators. It is significant that, through electronic networks, United Nations information can potentially be accessed by 18 million receivers, INTERNET users. While at this point, we can realistically speak of approximately 1,400 regular daily recipients of information, through

the Publications Board, we are also pursuing projects to make United Nations information available in a portable electronic format. We have successfully produced three major CD-ROM issuances - the Statistical Yearbook; UNCED on CD-ROM; a bibliography on Human Rights - and will release UNBIS Plus on CD-ROM by the end of this year. CD-ROM and other portable electronic access technology, on-line access, interactive networks like INTERNET and TOGETHERNET, and the development of the super information highway challenge us to adapt this technology, and utilize it to meet the information demands and improve the services of the United Nations - whether by acquiring information from or disseminating it.

We have recently introduced an electronic innovation of which we in the Department of Public Information are very proud, the United Nations Radio Bulletin Board. It facilitates daily access by broadcasting organizations to broadcast news reports and updates. But anyone can dial in. If at any time you wish to know about the noon briefing, Security Council meetings, or what the Secretary-General had said at a press conference, or listen to a report on the latest developments in peace-keeping, just dial 963-3777. The United Nations Radio Bulletin Board is a computer-based audio news system which stores and updates news bulletins about the United Nations and makes them accessible through the regular telephone line.

This new system is the beginning of what we hope will be a full-fledged broadcasting system that would meet the highest standards of the industry. This will require time, technology and resources. I hope that we can count on the support of the Committee as we seek to upgrade and develop this system to its full potential.

At this juncture, I might also note that perhaps one of the least publicized "success stories" of United Nations information activities is the sale of publications, which alone earned some $3.4 million in net revenue during 1992-1993. After a period of dormancy, a revitalized, restructured Publications Board which I was asked by the Secretary-General to chair, is dealing with the priority issues concerning United Nations publications. Recognizing the great potential of publications, the Board is reviewing the criteria for selecting manuscripts for publication to evaluate their potential to serve both as communications tools to convey the United Nations message and to enhance the Organization's image.

To expand further our information dissemination network, I would suggest exploring agreements with some key governmental and regional information agencies. This could be particularly helpful in preparing for the major conferences in 1994 and 1995 and would, I believe, not only achieve a wider dissemination of information but also generate wider support and a sense of partnership in the different regions.

The Department would seek to expand its partnership with Member States in the production and distribution of radio and television products. Radio, in particular, represents an extremely cost-effective means of reaching a wide audience. The Department is grateful for the cooperation extended by some Member States in this regard as well as for the initial, somewhat positive feedback we have been receiving from potential participants. If there is no objection on the part of this Committee, steps will be taken to reach further agreements wherever feasible.

Over the past year, the Department has taken steps to sharpen its message and speak with one voice in presenting a more unified United Nations at

Headquarters and in the field. The coordinated "focal point" approach, initiated in early 1994, as well as efforts to highlight areas where steps must be taken to eliminate fragmentation and duplication of public information efforts in the Secretariat are examples of two projects aimed at streamlining our information programmes.

That approach applies to Headquarters as well as to the field, including United Nations information centres, where, at the directive of the Secretary-General, measures have been taken to streamline our operations. Not only will we achieve economies of scale at a time of financial crisis, but also we will be in a better position to present a unified image of the Organization in the field. We are one, and the public perceives us as such. I am pleased to report that the efforts in this regard are paying off. Eventually, as we indicated in document A/AC.198/1994/6, we hope to see these results take a more tangible form in allowing for a more equitable distribution of resources for operational activities among information centres. The points made by the delegations responding to the survey will, of course, be taken fully into account as we continue in these efforts.

Streamlining enhanced cost-effectiveness and avoiding duplication have not been done in one area at the expense of another. For example, I am happy to mention that the United Nations has been released from its cumbersome lease on its current London premises of the United Nations information centre and is moving to a much less expensive, yet equally effective, location. Also, measures have been taken to avoid duplication within United Nations information operations at Vienna and to consolidate the three libraries and three United Nations information operations at Nairobi.

Similarly, as reported in document A/AC.198/1994/7, the Department of Public Information has responded to the mandate to enhance, reactivate and establish United Nations information centres called for under General Assembly resolution 46/73 B and 47/73 B. To summarize, these measures include the opening of an information centre in Yemen; the strengthening of United Nations information centres at Bujumbura, Dar es Salaam and Dhaka, by providing them with necessary staff and equipment as required; and ongoing collaboration with the Polish authorities with a view to establishing an information presence in Warsaw. We have also reactivated the United Nations information centre at Tehran with the appointment of two local staff, an Information Assistant and a Librarian. The Resident Coordinator, who is currently serving as Acting Director on an interim basis, reports regularly and effectively on information activities. We are also exploring the possibility of appointing a full-time Director at that Centre. In addition, full-time Directors are being appointed in Buenos Aires, Copenhagen, Harare, Mexico, New Delhi, Ouagadougou and Sydney, among others.

The Department's recent effort to fill these posts is especially significant because of the additional cuts in the staffing resources for the information centres for the current 1994-1995 biennium. We have lost five Director and nine local-level posts. Thus, I hope the Committee will agree that the Department will not be in a position to comply with every request for opening new centres, unless the General Assembly authorizes additional staffing and financial resources.

As the members of the Extended Bureau have been regularly informed, the Secretariat has also entered into talks with the German authorities regarding the logistical requirements for increasing United Nations information activity in Germany. Action to recruit a National Information Officer is under way.

Subject to the views of the Committee on Information, the Department would propose to proceed in that area, with the understanding that the extent of the activity and the scope of the presence would depend on the availability of resources.

I should also take the opportunity to mention another development which is not on your agenda, but which has been commented upon in the past by many delegations - namely, the United Nations interim offices that were established in 1992, first in some newly independent States of the former Soviet Union. As you know, the Department of Public Information and UNDP were instructed to establish jointly and administer these offices with public information and development components. At its forty-eighth session last December, the General Assembly adopted resolution 48/209, in which it authorizes the establishment of field offices of the United Nations development system, with continued public information activities in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and also in Eritrea. We will be reporting on the information activities of those offices to this Committee at its next session. It is worth noting that the General Assembly has provided additional budgetary resources for those offices, completely separate from the resources provided for the United Nations information centres. Thus, expenditure in this area will not be at the expense of existing information offices elsewhere.

The Department of Public Information will make every effort to strengthen its professional credibility, sharpen the focus on selected issues, forge strong media partnerships, develop wider key audiences, polish the tools of programme delivery and streamline the management of its operating machinery. To try to do so, its main available resource, its staff, will have to be fully utilized and mobilized, so that they become an integral part of the process. This, in turn, will depend on supportive flexibility by the offices dealing with finance and personnel.

I have this morning shared with you some activities the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat has been carrying out over the last several months. I have also tried to fill you in on some of the approaches and actions the Department has been taking to fulfil its mandate in these challenging times. In the interest of time, I have focused this morning on policy issues as well as matters of expressed concern to the Committee on Information. At the back of the room, you will find copies in English and French of part II of my statement. It gives a rather detailed account of how the Department has fulfilled the specific mandates handed to it by the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session, on the recommendation of this Committee.

In closing, I would leave you with a thought that has inspired many of the actions the Department has taken over the past several months to strengthen United Nations information programmes and which has encouraged the Department in finding innovative ways of addressing the challenges before it. It is true that United Nations "success stories" will not often make headlines. But, with the basic requirements to work: with a mobilized, trained and motivated staff; with an open dialogue with delegations; with a mutually professional and respectful relationship with the media and non-governmental organizations; and with administrative and budgetary support and flexibility; we remain hopeful, even confident, that the partnership of the Department of Public Information and departments throughout the Secretariat and the United Nations system will try to improve the headlines of tomorrow.

In paragraph 25 of its resolution 48/44 B, the General Assembly requested "the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its sixteenth session in 1994 ... on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution".

The interest of the international press and the public at large in the workings of the United Nations continues to grow unabated. The work of the Department with the news media has taken on a new dimension. The immediacy of television and radio requires, more than ever before, that broadcasters access United Nations events and news directly. Press releases and briefings have to meet the new challenges of the unprecedented number and variety of United Nations activities. The Department has established an active interaction with the media and will pursue every opportunity to utilize their interest to promcte an informed and positive understanding of the Organization.

With equal emphasis on both news and documentaries, the Department's radio and video programmes continue to reflect the full range of the Organization's activities by satellite transmissions, cable cast, shortwave and FM broadcasts, as well as the telephone. The Department is grateful to those broadcasting organizations, including Radio Cairo, All India Radio, Radio for Peace International, Radio Mexico International and China Radio International, which continue to provide transmitter facilities without cost, for the transmission of United Nations news and current affairs programmes. Presently, 38 radio programmes in 19 languages are being sent to approximately 1,600 radio stations in 198 countries, for a total of 3,000 cassettes and tapes per week. The Department's cooperation with the University for Peace is reflected in the number of United Nations radio programmes broadcast by Radio for Peace International (RFPI) in Costa Rica. The station continues to air United Nations daily news and the bulk of all United Nations weekly radio programmes both in English and Spanish to Central, North and Latin America, Europe and the Caribbean. The station repeats its broadcasts every eight hours and has consequently become one of the most important outlets for United Nations radio programmes.

As part of a more effective promotion of its visual products, the Department welcomes the European Broadcasting Union as a vital addition to its regular distributors of the "UN in Action" series. The participation of this association of some 60 active European television and radio networks in 40 countries will significantly enhance our ability to reach millions of people. In order to maintain essential contacts and establish new ones, participation in international festivals and markets is an important means of promotion. In January 1994, the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information presented the 1993 Department of Public Information awards for public service advertising which best exemplified the ideals and goals of the United Nations, at the New York Festivals ceremony.

For journalists covering the United Nations, the Office of the Spokesman is the first point of contact and the primary source of authoritative information on the important work being carried out daily within the Organization. The Department's staff members work closely on a daily basis with colleagues in the Spokesman's office to support them in performing their highly visible and responsible functions. The Spokesman, of course, receives guidance on a daily basis from the Secretary-General and from senior staff in his Executive Office. The Spokesman's daily briefings for correspondents, followed by briefings for

the delegation press officers, have a particular focus on the many peace-keeping operations and other political missions. It must be emphasized that the noon briefings, frequently supplemented by additional briefings, are a vivid reflection of the increasing daily activities of the Secretary-General and the Security Council. The Spokesman's staff assists him in preparing background information on current issues raised at these briefings, and also responds to constant inquiries from correspondents. The Office is also responsible for planning the Secretary-General's media-related activities, including setting up his press conferences and handling requests from journalists for interviews with him. The latter is made particularly difficult by the volume of requests received and the limited time available in the Secretary-General's demanding schedule. The Office of the Spokesman also provides three daily news information bulletins and daily, weekly, and monthly press clipping files to the Secretary-General and senior officials.

In the light of the vital role that public information plays in generating support at both the national and international levels for United Nations peace-keeping operations, the Department has strengthened its cooperation with these operations in the field. In consultation with the Department of Peace-keeping Operations and other substantive offices, the Department of Public Information continues to issue a steady flow of background publications in addition to other information support activities. Because of the urgency implicit in disseminating up-to-the-minute public information materials on United Nations field missions, the Department often distributes a desk-top publishing product first, followed by a professionally printed version. These publications are also distributed electronically through E-mail and INTERNET world wide.

The publication entitled "United Nations Peace-keeping: Information Notes" is now published twice a year. It contains periodic updates of comprehensive information relevant to each mission, including its historical background, action taken by the Security Council, their composition and financing. Also, the Department has recently issued new Reference Papers on the United Nations role in the former Yugoslavia and Somalia, containing detailed narratives on the developments in these areas, as well as full texts of relevant resolutions and other appropriate documents. During the reporting period, the Department has issued a booklet and a fold-out questions-and-answers poster, a video and a manual focusing on the new multidimensional peace-keeping and peacemaking responsibilities of the Organization. In September 1993, the Department, in cooperation with "Photo Perspectives", a leading photo agency, and the Department of Political Affairs, mounted the photographic exhibit "Faces of Sorrow: Agony in the Former Yugoslavia" in the Public Lobby at Headquarters. The exhibit launched by the Secretary-General was sponsored by Time magazine and the Soros Humanitarian Foundation, among others.

The radio services of the Department of Public Information have increased production and dissemination of programmes dealing with peace-keeping and peacemaking. In addition to the weekly programme "The Blue Helmets", the Department is now producing special radio segments on Somalia and the former Yugoslavia. These programmes are disseminated in Africa, Asia and Latin America through weekly regional magazines and by special arrangements with regional broadcasters carrying United Nations radio programmes. Their production has been facilitated by the close cooperation between the Department and peace-keeping missions in the field which supply daily radio reports on their activities.

Since the last session of the Committee on Information, the Department has planned and implemented a comprehensive public information programme including radio and video coverage in connection with the United Nations-monitored elections in Eritrea, El Salvador and South Africa. Similar preparations are under way for Mozambique.

A preview of the election in El Salvador was included in all radio news and news magazine programmes produced by the Department. Up-to-date radio items were fed directly from that country in English, Spanish and Portuguese on-line to United Nations Headquarters, and were incorporated into daily news bulletins and other news magazines. As part of pre-election publicity in El Salvador, and in close cooperation with the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), several video items were produced and aired prior to the elections. For instance, two editions of "UN in Action" ("El Salvador prepares for first free elections as UN monitors process" and "UN team unearths El Salvador Arms Caches") were part of CNN World Report of 14 February, and 16 March 1994, respectively. Another video entitled "UN declares El Salvador election 'acceptable'", was aired by CNN on 27 March 1994. With the assistance of ONUSAL, the Department provided photo coverage and media arrangements, including television satellite feeds to Spanish and Portuguese networks in Latin America and Europe.

Prior to the elections in South Africa, a number of video items on South Africa were produced in the "UN in Action" series, including "UN group monitors South Africa's transition to democracy". Another video entitled "UN elections monitors deploy in South Africa" which included an interview with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in South Africa was aired just before the elections in CNN World Report. With regard to radio programming, one edition of the 15-minute radio series "Perspective" was devoted exclusively to South Africa's elections. The programme, entitled "The March toward Democracy in South Africa", was adapted into various languages and distributed to more than 350 radio stations throughout the world. Under the general title, "Ensuring free and fair elections in South Africa", eight programmes on the election process leading to the vote were produced. Audio materials, including interviews with the staff of the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa (UNOMSA), representatives of the Organization of African Unity, as well as independent observers, were used in a weekly series "Focus on South Africa's Elections 1994". Weekly five-minute telephone news feeds were incorporated into radio news and news magazines produced at United Nations Headquarters, including "Southern African Review" and "Southern Africa News". On 22 April, all United Nations radio news and current affairs programmes carried segments on the elections and the role of the United Nations observers. The Department also, with the assistance of UNOMSA, provided photo coverage and publicized the elections in a "United Nations Focus" feature article and companion Fact Sheet, which was widely disseminated, particularly through the network of United Nations information centres and services.

The Department of Public Information, through its Cartographic Section, has prepared deployment maps for reports and briefing maps for 17 of the current peace-keeping operations. New country-profile maps were created or updated for new Member States.

As part of its ongoing series "Teaching about the United Nations", the Department issued in January 1994 a teaching manual and an educational video about United Nations peace-keeping, peacemaking and peace-building. The series is designed for use in secondary and upper-secondary schools. Through an

external distributor, the Department is pursuing the placement of its educational videos on CD-ROM, for use by libraries and schools.

In observance of the 1993 Disarmament Week, the Department and the Centre for Disarmament Affairs jointly organized, at Headquarters, a two-day symposium for journalists and non-governmental organizations to examine together new dimensions in arms regulation and disarmament in the post-cold war era. The Department, in 1994, also produced a video documentary entitled "Enough is Enough" dealing with this issue. A pamphlet was issued on the landmark Chemical Weapons Convention, which had been opened for signature earlier in 1993.

The Department has been very active in preparing for the forthcoming major United Nations conferences scheduled for 1994 and 1995. For the United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, recently concluded in Barbados, a special five-part documentary radio series was produced on topics such as the "Threat of climate change and sea-level rise", "The development challenge" and "Preparing for disasters and mitigating their effects". The Department produced a half-hour video entitled "Small Islands - Big Issues" for screening during the Conference and two segments of "UN in Action" for use by broadcasting organizations worldwide. Prior to the Conference, the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, were featured in the United Nations television programme "World Chronicle". The information strategy for the Conference has focused on reaching media and non-governmental organizations in island and donor countries. A press kit, brochure and poster were produced, with the slogan "Small Islands, Big Issues".

Owing to the Department's current initiatives to redeploy limited funding ("seed money") from Headquarters sources to enable the information centres to expand their activities to promote major United Nations conferences and events, some United Nations information centres servicing island developing States were able to organize round-table discussions and public meetings, symposia with geography teachers, briefings for journalists, special articles and TV programmes, radio spots, translations in local languages, and other promotional initiatives. The United Nations information centre at Port-of-Spain played a key role in publicizing the Global Conference in the Caribbean area. Among their many promotional activities, public service announcements were produced and placed on local radio stations. Among others who organized special events in support of the Global Conference were the information centres at Sydney, Manila, Rome and Colombo.

The Department is providing radio and press coverage for the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, to be held from 23 to 27 May 1994 at Yokohama, Japan. As pre-conference publicity, the Director of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction secretariat was recently featured in the United Nations television programme "World Chronicle".

The information programme for the International Conference on Population and Development, to be held from 5 to 13 September 1994 at Cairo, is being implemented in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the secretariat of the Conference. Topics to be covered are: gender equality, international migration, and reproductive rights, reproductive health and family planning. The Department is currently producing a series of six radio programmes to raise awareness of this important event. Another programme, "The Road from Cairo", will be produced after the Conference to elaborate on its outcome, including the plan of action for the next century.

"United Nations crime prevention activities further the development process by helping countries to provide stable and secure environments for sustainable development, while promoting human rights". This is one of the crucial messages that will be emphasized in the Department's multi-media campaign prepared for the 1995 Congress on Crime Prevention and the Treatment of Offenders. The campaign will seek to show how the main topics to be addressed by the Congress - international cooperation, action against organized and environmental crime, improvement of criminal justice systems and crime prevention strategies - have a critical impact on the quality of life. The Congress information programme will include production of a background brochure, an information kit covering key issues in crime prevention and control, "UN in Action" television programmes, local-language information material produced by information centres and services, and full press, radio, television and photographic coverage of the Congress itself.

The Department has developed a comprehensive public information programme for the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in consultation with the Summit secretariat. The programme focuses on four main messages: first, that the United Nations system is deeply involved in global economic and social development; secondly, that the United Nations is concerned with the implementation of the commitment of the Charter of the United Nations to promote higher standards of living, full employment and social progress; thirdly, that the Summit's main themes of poverty, employment and social integration are of universal interest; and fourthly, that significant material progress has been achieved in the world in recent decades and international cooperation has played a positive role in this. The campaign will target media, non-governmental organizations and educational institutions. Information will also be channelled to a wider audience through cultural institutions, intergovernmental and parliamentary bodies, arts and entertainment communities, trade unions, religious organizations, youth and women's groups and other appropriate institutions. Funding has been allocated within the budget of the information programme to provide assistance to field offices, especially United Nations information centres, to undertake special activities to promote the Summit. A number of special Joint United Nations Information Committee meetings have been held to develop joint system-wide activities to promote the Summit issues and to coordinate information programmes. Production of a radio documentary series is envisaged early next year prior to the World Summit.

In response to the growing interest of delegations, the media and non-governmental organizations for information regarding the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held from 4-15 September 1995 in Beijing, the Department has continued to enhance its information strategy for this major conference. An essential element in this regard is the assignment of a senior Department of Public Information officer to provide governmental and media liaison from May 1994 through the duration of the Conference. This is of particular importance since there is no United Nations information presence in Beijing as compared to other sites where major United Nations conferences are being held. In addition, the Department has produced background articles and regularly updated fact sheets and work is under way on a pre-conference brochure and a poster, to be ready in mid-1994. A reprint was produced of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, as well as a brochure summarizing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Also, UN Focus articles were produced or updated on issues such as violence against women, human rights of the girl child, and International Women's Day. The Department also distributed 10,000 copies of the popular poster produced by the Inter-Parliamentary Union on women's representation in parliaments world wide. In advance of the Conference, the Department will

produce a series of eight radio programmes highlighting the themes of the Conference to be distributed monthly during the months leading up to the Conference, from January to August 1995.

A variety of activities have been undertaken by the Department for the International Year of the Family which is being celebrated this year. These activities include production of an information kit and two 30-minute films, one on families under stress and the other on ageing and the family. The Department of Public Information television public service announcements are being broadcast by the CBS and Fox television networks in the United States and by CNN International. Copies have been made available to United Nations information centres and United Nations Associations for placement with local television stations. A print public service announcement for use in news magazines is also being produced. Observances and special programmes have been organized by the Department at Headquarters and in the field to mark the first International Day of Families, on 15 May. In conjunction with the launch of the Year by the General Assembly on 7 December 1993, the Department arranged a press conference and World Chronicle television interview with the Coordinator of the International Year, and provided journalists and delegates with information kits. A special edition of World Chronicle featured the United Nations Coordinator for the International Year. Preparations to produce a four-part radio documentary series are already under way, which will focus on: the changing family structure; marriage; children in crisis; and ageing.

To contribute to the vast array of activities commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, the Department is, among other things, currently producing a series of "video compilations" as a service to television producers. They will bring together film and video material from the United Nations and agency visual libraries covering 50 years of United Nations activities in the following fields: refugees; environment; children; women; and development. Individual reels will be released as they are completed and the full series will be ready in the early part of 1995.

In 1993, the Department's continued efforts to ensure effective coverage of United Nations activities on human rights were greatly expanded owing to the many additional activities undertaken to publicize the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights and the International Year of the World's Indigenous People (1993) with print and audiovisual material. For the World Conference itself, the Department provided daily briefings for the media and other media liaison activities, press accreditation, conference press coverage, radio, television and photo coverage and information servicing of the United Nations information centres and other United Nations information outlets. Other Department-organized activities at the site at Vienna included: a journalists' encounter for over 300 media representatives, a fellowship programme for developing country journalists to attend and cover the Conference, a joint United Nations system exhibition of panels and photographs on human rights and 71 press conferences and briefings. Prior to the Conference, the Department had organized an outreach campaign to the media with the eight eminent persons invited by the Secretary-General to attend the Conference as his special guests.

The Department produced two short videos that were screened at the eleventh session of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, and is presently preparing an illustrated book to commemorate the International Year and to publicize the proclamation of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. Other products related to the launch of the International Year included a colour poster, an information kit and a student leaflet. The Department's network of information centres and services played a significant role in

furthering the objectives of the World Public Information Campaign on the International Year by disseminating and translating into local languages relevant materials, organizing events, publishing articles in newspapers and magazines, and granting interviews to media.

A major multi-media exhibit with an accompanying brochure, "Common Threads: Indigenous People and the Modern World" was mounted in the General Assembly public lobby and opened on 15 October 1993 by the Assistant Secretary-General of Public Information and the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights. The exhibit was enhanced by an effective collaboration with a number of interested external organizations, including several alternative trading groups and a major TV/book production company, at no additional cost to the Organization. Both the centrepiece of the exhibit - a montage of textiles and other material produced by indigenous peoples in various parts of the world - and the backdrop of contemporary colour photos were made possible by this collaboration. A scaled-down version of the exhibit produced by the Department has been travelling in the United States since February 1994.

Regarding other special observances in the past year, the Department, the World Health Organization and the American Foundation for AIDS Research (AmFAR) co-sponsored a panel discussion for World AIDS Day, on 1 December 1993. The focus of the discussion was the contribution that the arts and entertainment community has made towards the fight against AIDS. Immediately following the address by the Secretary-General, Ms. Liza Minnelli gave the premier performance of her song "The Day After That" in the General Assembly Lobby. Proceeds from the sale of the recording are going to AmFAR for AIDS research. The event received wide publicity in the international media.

In line with its mandate to continue to disseminate information about the role of the United Nations in drug control, the Department carried out a variety of multi-media information activities during the past year. In February, press conferences were arranged in New York and Vienna with the President and members of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) to launch the annual report of the Board. In advance of the launch, the Department prepared and distributed press kits, and issued a press release. With funding assistance from the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, the Department carried out a number of activities to publicize the General Assembly meetings on drug control in October 1993. The Department produced a 10-panel travelling exhibit for display in the General Assembly Delegates' Entrance area. The exhibit is currently being shown at the United Nations site at Vienna. Also, an information kit containing the Department's booklet "The United Nations and Drug Abuse Control" and United Nations International Drug Control Programme material was widely distributed. United Nations drug control activities were documented on video through the Department's "UN in Action" programme, which was broadcast on CNN prior to the General Assembly meetings.

The Department has continued to disseminate information about United Nations activities pertaining to current developments in the Middle East, Palestine in particular, and the peace process, as mandated by General Assembly resolutions 48/44 B and 48/158 C, relating to the special information programme on the question of Palestine. In this context, the Department has been making every effort to contribute to the peace process by fostering dialogue between the parties concerned. As the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People stated in its recent report to the General Assembly, the special information programme had "contributed to an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and supportive of the peace process".

A half-hour video entitled "Palestine 1890s-1990s" has been completed in English with Arabic, French and Spanish versions to follow. The Department published a book representing the proceedings of the encounter for Greek journalists on the question of Palestine, held at Athens in April 1993, which focused on the future of Jerusalem. As a follow-up to another encounter organized for European journalists in London in June 1993, the Department has prepared a book based on the proceedings, entitled Promoting a Culture for Peace in the Middle East. In April 1994, the Department organized a fact-finding news mission for European and Japanese journalists to the Middle East in support of the peace process. In cooperation with the Government of Denmark, an international journalists' encounter on the question of Palestine is being scheduled to take place at Elsinore, Denmark from 15 to 17 June. Also, the Department is cooperating with UNESCO and the Government of Spain in preparing a seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people in the field of media development, planned for Toledo, Spain from 13 to 15 September 1994. In all of these activities, every effort has been made to ensure wide participation.

To further international efforts towards the total eradication of apartheid and support for the establishment of a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa, the Department organized a "Seminar on the Image of the United Nations in South Africa", which took place at Cape Town in February 1994. Designed as a forum for open discussion on future relations between the United Nations system and the new South Africa, the seminar focused on the country's educational system and the new generation of South African youth. Co-sponsored by the Department of Public Information and the University of the Western Cape, with funding assistance from the Special Committee against Apartheid and UNESCO, the seminar brought together some 30 South African scholars, educators, textbook writers, historians and policy makers, as well as specialists from the United Nations system.

The Department has intensified its activities to raise international awareness of Africa's deepening economic crisis and of the efforts by African countries, with international support, to initiate recovery through far-reaching economic and political reform. The Department prepared a special publication devoted to the November 1993 report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. As a result, editorials appeared in The New York Times and the International Herald Tribune emphasizing the Secretary-General's call for more concerted international action on behalf of Africa. In addition, this special publication was also reproduced by, among others, the internationally disseminated periodical African Business.

The quarterly periodical Africa Recovery, as the Department's main vehicle for raising international awareness of the African crisis, continues to have an important impact among its media, non-governmental organization and policy-forming audiences. Articles published in Le Soir (Belgium) and The Independent (United Kingdom) were directly based on the Department's Africa Recovery Briefing Paper dealing with the famine that southern African countries averted with the help of the United Nations system and the international community in 1992-1993. Other Department of Public Information publications have emphasized the link between peace, development and humanitarian actions by the United Nations in Africa. These included Briefing Papers on Mozambique and Angola, which have been used, for example, as a briefing tool for United States Congressmen travelling on a mission to Mozambique.

The Department has continued to pursue its mandate to disseminate information about United Nations activities pertaining to decolonization and the

situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories in connection with the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. In close consultation with the Department of Political Affairs and the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, the Department produced a poster entitled "Decolonization by the Year 2000: Freedom to Choose", in English, French and Spanish.

On the subject of recurrent institutional publications, it should be noted that Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, with the cooperation of the Department, is making every effort to eliminate the backlog of the Yearbook. All current editions of the Yearbook are now published within 12 months following the calendar year covered, thus the 1993 edition is scheduled for publication in December 1994. However, eliminating the remaining backlog volumes (43:1989 and 44:1990) is expected to be achieved by 1998 instead of 1995 as originally envisaged. In his report on the Yearbook of the United Nations of 28 February 1991 (A/AC.198/1991/6), the Secretary-General underlined that it was vital "to establish a management control system which secures stability and high professional standards for the staff of the UN Yearbook section". The Committee might wish, therefore, to consider requesting the General Assembly to waive in respect of the United Nations Yearbook section the existing policy requirement of its resolution 33/143 in order to allow the Department to place experienced writers on the staff of the respective unit until the total elimination of the backlog.

During the past year, the Department has updated several of its most popular publications containing general information on the United Nations and its work. These include: Basic Facts About the United Nations, in English and French, with the Spanish version currently in the final stages of preparation; Image and Reality, in English, French and Spanish, which answers frequently asked questions about the functions and role of the United Nations; and an updated version of the brochure UN in Brief. A new edition of Everyone's United Nations has been completed and is expected to be available shortly. The Department has also produced and distributed a children's booklet on the Organization at work, entitled "What's the United Nations". Language versions of the publication have been arranged in several cases by United Nations information centres.

Increasingly, United Nations information centres and services are essential in promoting public understanding about the Organization, its new tasks and responsibilities, and in mobilizing the support of local media, Government agencies, parliamentarians, non-governmental organizations and educational institutions world wide. Newsletters and press releases are produced and distributed in 17 languages, and publications of the Department are adapted and published by information centres in national languages, as required and wherever possible. In addition, there is a growing level of United Nations information centres' activities in connection with major conferences, seminars, and other important events held away from Headquarters, and particularly in providing public information support for the Organization's peace-keeping and peacemaking activities.

The Department is making every effort to foster the best possible relations with the accredited press corps. During the past year, a total of 8,275 media representatives were serviced at Headquarters. The increased number of accreditations and the subsequent requirements for facilities has added to the perennial problem of office space and related services at Headquarters. As requested by the Committee on Information, a task force has been established under the Chairmanship of the Director of the Media Division comprising

representatives of the Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit and of the United Nations Correspondents Association (UNCA), including its President, to solve this problem. The task force has met several times and some ad hoc solutions have been found to the most pressing cases. However, a solution to the space problem for correspondents will have to be found in the much larger context of solving the space problem of the entire Secretariat. In the meantime, the Department will continue to make every effort to accommodate members of the press corps in the best possible way.

Over the past 14 years, a total of 224 broadcasters and journalists from more than 120 countries have taken part in the annual Department of Public Information Training Programme for Broadcasters and Journalists from Developing Countries. This year, beginning in September, the six-week programme will bring together journalists and broadcasters from 16 countries. The programme, established in 1980 by the General Assembly, provides in-service training to journalists from developing countries. In addition to its training aspects, the programme provides the participants with in-depth briefings covering the entire range of United Nations activities.

The Department continues to explore further ways and means to "open up" the resources contained in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, thereby making the information more easily accessible to the international community. Part of the Library's responsibility is to acquire the information resources required by the Organization and its Member States. Traditionally this has meant owning printed copies of this information and, more recently, owning non-printed copies, such as CD-ROMs. However, technological innovations have transformed this process to the point that the information need never really reside in the Library, but could be transferred there on demand. To this end, the Library has been initiating and further pursuing the establishment of an interdepartmental, jointly funded and coordinated information resource network capable of providing such efficient information to its users in the most effective manner.

The Dag Hammarskjöld Library is responsible for primary bibliographic control of the documents and publications issued by the Organization from all its world-wide locations and, accordingly, maintains a variety of bibliographic, factual, thesaurus and full-text databases. UNBIS is currently available online to 84 Governments, and to 77 missions at Headquarters and 14 at Geneva and Vienna. Several recurrent index series are issued from these databases in hard copy, but the most significant Dag Hammarskjöld Library output is UNBIS Plus on CD-ROM, which is due out very shortly. This CD-ROM product will provide easy access, with a user-friendly retrieval software and extensive hypertext links, to all the major databases produced by the Library. It will be distributed free of charge to all United Nations information centres. It will also be available for sale to United Nations depository libraries and other institutions throughout the world, with concessional prices to users in developing countries.

Through the Depository Library system, which the Dag Hammarskjöld Library is mandated to establish and maintain, users all over the world have access to United Nations documents and publications. At present there are over 330 such libraries in 136 Member States and Territories. Also, the Library is becoming increasingly involved in promotional activities related to major United Nations conferences by developing related book exhibits and special bibliographic outputs on Conference themes. In November 1993, the Library added the United Nations Oral History Collection to its resources, which was the result of a project implemented by Yale University and funded by the Department from extrabudgetary resources. This collection is comprised of a series of interviews with personalities associated with the United Nations on various key

international issues. It is important that this valuable project be continued to include subjects that have not yet been covered and to broaden the base of personalities interviewed, thereby ensuring a balanced view of the work of the United Nations.

Non-governmental organizations serve as the Department's vital link to a large, dynamic and ever-increasing global constituency. The Department provides information and accreditation services to representatives of approximately 1,400 non-governmental organizations. Over the last decade, the number of non-governmental organizations associated with the Department has quadrupled, with more applying for association each year. Currently, the Department is planning to launch an international campaign to increase the number of accredited non-governmental organizations from developing countries. It is also presently expanding its annual directory of non-governmental organizations associated with the Department to include two annexes, classifying non-governmental organizations by country and region, and by their specialty or field of interest relevant to the United Nations. The theme of the 1994 annual NGO conference, to be convened by the Department at Headquarters from 12 to 14 September 1994, will be "We the Peoples: Building Peace". It will focus on the actual and potential role of non-governmental organizations in peacemaking, peace-keeping and peace-building. As a supplement to this important annual event, and in order to strengthen its collaboration with non-governmental organizations around the world, the Department is examining the possibility of holding regional NGO conferences. In addition to its weekly briefings for non-governmental organizations, the Department continues to produce a number of publications on major topics and provides other products and services through its NGO Resource Centre.

One of the major public outreach activities that the Department carries out is the guided tours operation at Headquarters. In recent years, close to half a million visitors from around the world have been serviced annually. The operation was suspended for two and a half months last fall owing to heightened security concerns. However, with the support of the Committee on Information, the tours were resumed in December 1993, but, unfortunately, with a number of restrictions. The visitors no longer have access to the Security Council or Trusteeship Council chambers; on some days, the Economic and Social Council chamber or the General Assembly Hall are not accessible. Moreover, the exhibit space has been drastically reduced, eliminating, for example, exhibits on disarmament, as well as on the economic and social work of the United Nations. In 1993, a total of 366,837 visitors took the guided tour. This represents a decrease of about 107,000 compared with 1992. As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, we need more than ever the informed understanding and support of "We the Peoples". The Department is working closely with the Office of General Services and others concerned so that we can once again offer a meaningful tour experience to visitors, making them return home with a stronger sense of identity with the United Nations.

The continuing involvement of the United Nations in peace-keeping and peacemaking activities accounted for higher levels of correspondence and inquiries received by the Public Inquiries Unit, with a total of 130,000 inquiries and petitions being handled in 1993 compared to 90,000 for 1992. The Department of Public Information speakers' bureau has serviced close to 700 groups last year requesting special briefings on various aspects of the work of the United Nations. Greater efforts are under way to reach out to the target audiences of educators, students, model United Nations conference participants and non-governmental organizations by anticipating the area of their particular interest in the United Nations.

The Department of Public Information's inter-agency cooperation with its partners in the United Nations system has been reinvigorated, resulting in more focused system-wide information programmes for major United Nations conferences and the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, as well as in the fostering of a unified image of the United Nations system. The Joint United Nations Information Committee has developed into a decision-oriented body with regard to practical issues of common project implementation, the use of new technologies and the better sharing of resources. The Department continued to organize special events for the display of information material. The fourth annual United Nations Information Fair, held in October 1993 in the Public Lobby at Headquarters, proved to be a popular and successful event, involving the participation of 30 agencies and departments from the United Nations system.

"Agenda for people" is the working title for a United Nations system exhibit that will travel to three major international conferences: the International Conference on Population and Development; the World Summit for Social Development; and the Fourth World Conference on Women. Production by the Department is currently under way with financial contributions from seven agencies and programmes (UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNEP, UNDCP, UNDP, INSTRAW) and photographic materials from all Joint United Nations Information Committee Photo Editors. Audiovisual projects involving inter-agency cooperation and joint financial support include a series of radio programmes on the subject of water, which the Department is planning to produce. "The Broken Flight" is the title of a new 30-minute documentary video on workplace and environment, co-produced with the International Labour Organization.

The Department continues to provide its full support for UNESCO and its International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC). The Department, together with UNESCO, UNDP, and the Government of Chile, co-sponsored a successful seminar to support independent and pluralistic media in the Latin America and Caribbean region. The seminar, with emphasis on media development in both rural and overpopulated urban areas, has just taken place from 2 to 6 May at Santiago. There were some 80 participants, among them journalists, publishers, radio and television broadcasters, managers of big print and electronic media, and communications scholars. This seminar followed two prior successful seminars, one for the African region, held at Windhoek, in 1991, and one for the Asian region, held at Almaty in 1992. The Santiago seminar concentrated on the assistance of disadvantaged population groups to develop their own means of information and communication and to foster the use of new communication technologies. As was the case with the earlier seminars, this seminar provided an opportunity to evaluate the needs and concerns of media practitioners of the region, and to propose a series of recommendations and concrete projects.

Last but not least, the Department, both at Headquarters and through its information centres, has contributed to the success of the first commemoration of World Press Freedom Day, 3 May, established by the General Assembly in its decision 48/432 of 20 December 1993. Mindful that the original proposal for this commemorative day emanated from the Windhoek seminar on promoting an independent and pluralistic press, the information centre there, observed the event in an effective way. In collaboration with the regional UNESCO office, together with local media organizations, a number of activities were carried out, such as the production of a poster and of a newspaper supplement, and the launch of a special appeal by Namibian journalists.